

Message Text

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44

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00

USIE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SY-05 A-01 OPR-02

OC-05 CCO-00 EB-07 FEAE-00 TRSE-00 /094 W

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O R 311425Z DEC 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7926

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NICOSIA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN NY

CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON UK

COMMSIXTHFLT

CTF SIX ZERO

CTF SIX ONE

CTF SIX TWO

CTG SIX ZERO PT TWO

FOSIF ROTA SPAIN

FICEURLANT NORFOLK VA

DIA WASHDC

CIA WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 15727

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, PFOR, LE

SUBJ: SECURITY AND POLITICS ASSUME HOLDING PATTERN AS OLD YEAR
ENDS

REF: BEIRUT 15655 (1455Z)

1. SUMMARY: BEIRUT AND OTHER AREAS RELATIVELY CALM BUT BY NO MEANS FREE OF INCIDENTS DURING LAST 24 HOURS. ARMED ELEMENTS ARE DUE TO BE OFF STREETS BY 1600 HOURS TODAY, DEC 31, AND TREND TOWARD THAT END MAY BE UNDERWAY EVEN THOUGH ARMED MEN PERSIST IN SOME AREAS. DISTRIBUTION OF GASOLINE AND FUEL OIL IMPROVING IN CAPITAL. LOOTING IS EMERGING AS MAJOR HEADACHE. POLITICAL ACTIVITY CENTERS ON SERIES OF MEETING THAT BEGAN WITH MOSLEM-PALESTINIAN "SUMMIT" YESTERDAY AND CONTINUES WITH IMPORTANT MEETING OF MARONITE LEADERS TODAY. YESTERDAY'S CABINET SESSION WAS INCONCLUSIVE. END SUMMARY.

2. ALTHOUGH OFFICIAL SOURCES EXPRESS CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM ABOUT SECURITY SITUATION, PERSISTENCE OF SOME ARMED MEN IN STREETS OF BEIRUT AND CONTINUED LOW-LEVEL FIGHTING LAST 24 HOURS MAKE MANY OBSERVERS SKEPTICAL. SPORADIC EXCHANGES OF FIRE OCCURRED NIGHT DEC 30-31 IN SEVERAL QUARTERS OF EAST BEIRUT AND IN CENTER OF CITY. SEVERAL RAODS IN CAPITAL AREA ARE DECLARED UNSAFE TODAY, DEC 31, ALTHOUGH TRAFFIC CIRCULATING LIGHTLY.

3. HIGHER COORDINATION COMMITTEE DECIDED EVENING DEC 30 THAT ALL ARMED ELEMENTS SHOULD BE OFF STREETS BY 1600 HOURS (LOCAL) TODAY AND ORDERS HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO SECURITY FORCES TO SHOOT ON SIGHT ALL PERSONS CARRYING ARMS WITHOUT AUTHORIZATION AFTER THAT HOUR. THERE WERE STILL ARMED MEN IN EVIDENCE AS OF NOON DEC 31, AND WHILE SHOOT-ON-SIGHT ORDER UNDOUBTEDLY SERIOUS FEW BEIRUTIS EXPECT IT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED STRONGLY. INTERNAL SECURITY HQ SOURCE INSISTED AT 1400 HOURS, HOWEVER, THAT ARMED MEN WERE LEAVING POINTS OF GREATEST TENSION, AND HE WAS CONFIDENT
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THAT SECURITY FORCES WOULD ACT AS NECESSARY WHEN 1600 HOUR DEADLINE PASSES. AS WE SEE IT, MOST THAT CAN BE SAID IS THAT TREND STILL EXISTS TO IMPROVE SECURITY, AND NOTHING HAS YET OCCURRED TO DERAIL CURRENT EFFORTS TOWARD THAT GOAL.

4. ZAHLE AND TRIPOLI ARE REPORTED GENERALLY CALM, BUT AN INCIDENT OCCURRED ON ROAD BETWEEN TRIPOLI AND ZGHORTA YESTERDAY THAT COULD REKINDLE TENSIONS IN NORTH. VERSION

CARRIED BY PRESS IS THAT MEN IN A ZGHORTIOTE JEEP KILLED FOUR INHABITANTS OF THE MOSLEM VILLAGE OF IHAL, NEAR ZGHORTA. ACCORDING TO INTERNAL SECURITY HQ IN BEIRUT, THIS INCIDENT HAS NOT YET SPARKED ANY MAJOR REACTION AMONG MOSLEMS IN NORTH. THIS SOURCE WAS HOPEFUL IT WOULD PASS WITHOUT UNCONTROLLABLE EFFECT.

5. WITH THE IMPROVEMENT IN SECURITY CONDITIONS, THE ECONOMY OF THE CAPITAL IS SLOWLY STIRRING. THE DISTRIBUTIONS SYSTEM IS SHOWING SIGNS OF LIFE, EASING SHORTAGES OF FUEL OIL AND GASOLINE. LOOTERS LAST NIGHT RANSACKED SIX-STORY PANAM BUILDING ON RIAD SOLH SQUARE. LOOTING IS EMERGING AS A MAJOR PROBLEM AND IS THE SUBJECT OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF SECURITY AND ARMY LEADERS WITH PREMIER KARAME AND INTERIOR MINISTER CHAMOUN TODAY.

6. POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS CONTINUE AT STEADY PACE TO WORK OUT A "COMMON DENOMINATOR" POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, BUT WITHOUT BREAKTHROUGH YET. YESTERDAY'S CABINET MEETING DID NOT ADDRESS ITSELF TO THE FIVE-POINT REFORM PACKAGE, REPORTEDLY BECAUSE FRANGIE AND KARAME SAW BEFORE MEETING STARTED THAT THEY WERE ON COLLISION COURSE OVER SOME OF ITS FEATURES. THEY DECIDED TO CONSULT THEIR RESPECTIVE CONSTITUENCIES AND TO POSTPONE CABINET DISCUSSION.

7. MOST ATTENTION FOCUSING ON SERIES OF UNOFFICIAL MEETINGS THAT BEGAN YESTERDAY WITH MOSLEM-PALESTINIAN "SUMMIT" AT HOME OF SUNNI MUFTI. BESIDES THE MUFTI, THE MEETING INCLUDED KARAME, SAEB SALAM, ABDALLAH YAFI, SHIITE IMAM MUSA AS SADR, DRUZE SHEIKH AKL MOHAMED ABU SHAKRA, AND PLO CHIEF YASSER 'ARAFAT. CONSPICUOUSLY ABSENT WAS KAMAL JUMBLATT, WHOSE POSITION AS SPOKESMAN OF SECULAR LEFTISTS REMAINS A DIFFICULTY, ALTHOUGH 'ARAFAT LATER CONFERRED WITH CONFIDENTIAL

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JUMBLATT IN EFFORT TO COORDINATE POSITIONS WITH HIM. THE MOSLEM "SUMMIT" DECIDED TO ADOPT NO FIRM POSITION ON REFORM ISSUES PENDING THE OUTCOME OF IMPORTANT MARONITE MEETING IN PROGRES TODAY THAT JOINS CAMILLE CHAMOUN, PIERR GEMAYEL, CHARLES MALIK AND MONASTERY LEADER CHARBEL KASSIS.

8. DEPENDING ON OUTCOME OF TODAY'S MARONITE MEETING, PLAN IS THAT RENEWED MOSLEM-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE WILL BE SET ON TRACKS LEADING TO AGREED SETTLEMENT. NEXT STEP, HOPEFULLY, IS A MEETING OF MOSLEM AND CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS LEADERS, AFTER WHICH A BROADLY-BASED "CONGRESS" WILL BE HELD JOINING NATIONAL RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL FIGURES. LAST WEEK'S FIVE-POINT PLAN REMAINS THE BASIS OF NEGOTIATIONS. THE MAIN OBSTACLE AT THIS STAGE APPEARS TO BE THE ATTITUDE

OF FRANGIE AND OTHER HARD-LINING CHRISTIANS. BY THROWING
HIS IDEA OF A CENSUS INCLUDING EMIGRES INTO THE POT, THE
PRESIDENT HAS STIRRED UP THE CONCOCTION CONSIDERABLY.

9. BARRING A MAJOR DOWNTURN IN THE SECURITY PICTURE, WE
DO NOT PLAN TO SUBMIT A SITREP TOMORROW, JAN 1. HAPPY
NEW YEAR*
GODLEY

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